

**Public Hearing on Senate Bill 156, An Act Concerning Siblings Visitation for Children in Care and Custody
of the Commissioner of Children and Families before the Select Committee on Children of the Connecticut
General Assembly**

Hello ladies and gentleman,

My name is Liza Pickens I'm 20 years old and reside in Norwich CT; I come before you today as an adolescent client of the Department of Children and Families to help advocate and emphasize my support for Senate Bill 156, An act concerning Sibling Visitation for Children in the Care and Custody of the Commissioner of Children and Families".

Frequent and regular contact between siblings is essential to promoting the emotional well-being and long-term stability of young people in (DCF) care. "For two years I lived in an all-girls group home , I've seen some of the girls encounter pain and being stressed out day to day because they have yet to see there brothers or sisters. I've seen girls run away and cut themselves with staff members saying everything will be okay! But will everything be okay? Seeing as the staff only work a 9 hour shift and then there back home with the ones they love unconditionally, the same unconditional love that all kids in the Department of Children and Families need. Key word "Family". There is no therapy that can substitute for family contact.

I will not stand here before you today and act like I know your lifestyle and how you all grew up, but I have seen and heard and lived the dream that every child in the (DCF) system longs for, and that is to either be with our family once again or see them as much as we can. I have been able to just ask "what's new for you this week"? This Senate Bill 156 will help improve emotional well-being by allowing youth to see siblings as much as needed! Once a week visits are very important seeing as we don't spend the lifetime that we should with our biological siblings. What's supposed to be our "everlasting relationship" is now a once in while get together"?

"Personally I cannot stand here and say I didn't see my siblings all the time with the help of Department of Children and Families (DCF). The case aids (CA) brought me to spend as much time that I could with my siblings. My youngest sister was placed in a Residential all the way in Florida near Daytona Beach, with that being said my (DCF) worker herself was bringing me and two of my other siblings three times a year to go see her and we would

spend a whole week out in Florida. There were times that I called the residential facility and she was not able to speak with me and I would worry about her. When I saw her in Florida it assured me that she was really okay and I was able to focus on my own life and do what I needed to do. Just because visits are working out for me in the best way that they can does not mean that they are working out for all youth in care and I would like to have more frequent visits with my six sisters and four brothers. If I reached out to anyone today and helped prove a big point on behalf of the Senate Bill 156, Act Concerning Sibling Visitation for Children in Care and Custody of the Commissioner of Children and Families "I ask you please to support the sibling rights for kids in (DCF) care by voting yes on Senate Bill 156."

"I thank you for your time and listening to me speak and I welcome any questions you have for me"